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Martin in Dalmatia***

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“FRANKISH” OR “BYZANTINE” SAINT? THE ORIGINS OF THE CULT OF SAINT MARTIN IN DALMATIA *

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This paper grew out of my research in Dalmatian hagiotopography and was originally meant to contribute to a scholarly discussion about the extent and the character of Byzantine presence in early medieval Dalmatia. As my work progressed, its focus became more and more narrow. From the bold and ambitious attempt to use local hagiotopography in order to identify and reconstruct a “sense of belonging” to the Byzantine Empire, in early medieval Dalmatia, it became a case study of the history of the cult of a saint not at all Byzantine at a first glance. Remembering the original inspiration of my enterprise, I would like to depart from the broader historical context, or, more precisely, the traditional narrative of the Byzantine presence in the Adriatic. Namely, the traditional master narrative maintains that the areas along the eastern Adriatic coast were under Byzantine rule from late antiquity (at least the age of Justinian (527-65)) until the late eleventh century.² Scholars who sought to prove the “real presence” of the Byzantine

* Besides the II Postgraduate Forum in Byzantine Studies: *Sailing to Byzantium*, portions of this paper were presented at the conference *European Symposium on St Martin of Tours: Slovenia and Central European Countries on St Martin's Trail*, held in Slovenska Bistrica (October 11–13, 2007). An earlier version of the paper was published as Trpimir Vedriš, “Češčenje svetega Martina v Dalmaciji v pozni antiki in zgodnjem srednjem veku [The cult of St Martin in Dalmatia in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages],” in *Sveti Martin Tourski kot simbol evropske culture*, ed. Jasmina Arambašić (Celovec-Ljubljana: Mohorjeva družba, 2008), 92-106. The initial direction for my research owes much to discussions with Nikola Jakšić and Marina Vicelja-Matijašić. I am especially grateful to Marianne Sághy for encouragement, comments and corrections. Magdalena Skoblar, Nikolina Maraković and Ivan Basić read draft of the paper and I am grateful for their comments.

² Cf. Jadran Ferluga, *L'amministrazione bizantina in Dalmazia* (Venice: Deputazione di storia patria per le Venezie, 1978); idem, *Byzantium on the Balkans: Studies on the Byzantine Administration and the Southern Slavs from the VIIth to the XIIth Centuries* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1976). Ferluga's views were revised and supplemented by Ivo Goldstein, *Bizant na Jadranu: od Justinijana I. do Bazilija I* [Byzantium in the Adriatic from Justinian I to Basil I] (Zagreb: Latina et graeca, 1992); idem, “Byzantium on the

Empire in the Adriatic have often referred to hagiotopography, and with good reason. The earliest hagiotopography of the region clearly attests that the Dalmatian islands and cities (especially the ones included in the Byzantine *thema* throughout the early medieval period) are “studded” with churches dedicated to “Byzantine” saints, probably the most popular of them being St Michael, St George, St Cosmas and Damian and St Nicholas. These *tituli*, along with the cults of the urban patron saints, many of which were certainly introduced as part of Byzantine foreign policy,³ supports the hypothesis of a significant Byzantine presence in this period.⁴ Despite the relatively “thick layer” of the saints of Eastern origin in the medieval Dalmatian *sanctorale*, extant liturgical evidence rarely preserves elements of Greek liturgy or Byzantine cult of the saints. Even though stylistic and architectural elements indicate Byzantine influence in late antique and early medieval Dalmatia, Greek liturgy is poorly attested in medieval Dalmatian cities (at least in Lower Dalmatia). Likewise, Greek epigraphic finds are extremely scarce after the sixth century. A few known Greek fragments (a fragment of the Gospel from an altar slab in Zadar, an inscription on a sarcophagus from Split and a few more) seem to be the only remaining Greek inscriptions from early medieval Lower Dalmatia. Apart from a few words scattered here and there, local hagiography shows no trace of contemporary Byzantine hagiography. All this

Adriatic from 550 till 800,” *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 4 (1998): 7-14; idem, “The Disappearance of Byzantine Rule in Dalmatia in the 11th Century,” in *Byzantium and East Central Europe*, 129-39, eds Günter Prinzig, et al. (Cracow: Historia Jagellonica, Jagellonian University, 2001); idem, “O naravi bizantske prisutnosti na istočnojadranskoj obali 6-12. stoljeća [On the character of the Byzantine presence on the eastern Adriatic coast],” *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 24 (1991): 5-13. For a contradicting view, see Mladen Ančić, “The Waning of the Empire. The Disintegration of Byzantine Rule on the North Adriatic in the 9th Century,” *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 4 (1998): 15-24; idem, “Lombard and Frankish Influences in the Formation of the Croatian Dukedom,” in *L’Adriatico dalla tarda antichità all’età carolingia. Atti del convegno di studio Brescia 11-13 ottobre 2001*, eds Giampaetro Brogiolo and Paolo Delogu (Firenze: Insegna del Giglio, 2005), 213-28.

³ Cf. John Osborne, “Politics, Diplomacy and the Cult of Relics in Venice and the Northern Adriatic in the First Half of the Ninth Century,” *Early Medieval Europe* 8/3 (1999): 369-86.

⁴ Besides the *tituli* of, often solitary, churches which remain today as the last signposts of Justinian’s Adriatic *limes maritimus* the majority of the urban patron saints from the period between the mid-sixth and late-twelfth centuries are as a rule of East Roman/Byzantine origin (e.g. Rovinj (*Mons rubeus*): St Euphemia of Chalcedon; Rab (*Arba*): St Christophorus; Zadar (*Iadera*): St Anastasia of Sirmium (also St Chrysogonus of Aquileia and Agape, Chionia and Irene of Thesaloniki), Trogir (*Tragurium*): St John the Almsgiver of Alexandria; Split (*Aspalatum*): St. Domnius of Antioch; Dubrovnik (*Ragusa*): St Sergius and Bacchus; Kotor (Decatera): St Trypho etc.).

evidence, taken together, shows that, even though many saints of Eastern origin were venerated in Early Medieval Dalmatia, their cult was as a rule substantially transformed in the centuries to come and as a result, they lost their distinctive “Greek” or “Byzantine” features.⁵ The vast majority of the saints in question in fact belong to an earlier period. This observation not only calls for the scrupulous analysis of the evidence about “Byzantine Dalmatia”, but also reminds us that the same evidence should be used with the utmost caution.

In order to place my work in a broader context of research on local hagiotopography, I will distinguish (however tentative and introductory they be) three particular chronological layers of the “Dalmatian hagiographic map”. The period of the “initial Christianisation” of Dalmatia (fourth to fifth centuries) is the first, when eastern Mediterranean influence is reflected both in the actual presence of Christians from the East and the spread of the cults of Eastern saints. The second phase is Justinian’s *reconquista* and its aftermath in the mid-sixth century which left a strong impact on the hagiotopography of the region. As the result of the vigorous building activity one discovers the traces of an almost “programmatic” introduction of saints’ cults along the newly established *limes marittimus* in Dalmatia. In the context of the late sixth and seventh centuries one should also regard the problem of the destiny of the populations whose flight from the hinterland Illyricum to the coast is attested both in epigraphic inscriptions (e.g. the tomb of Abbess Marina from Sirmium in Salona) and the translation of the cults (e.g. St Quirinus of Siscia to the island of Krk). The third, “Byzantine hagiographic” layer is to be connected to the early ninth-century influx of the Byzantine relics into the cities on the Adriatic coast. This element reflects a large-scale political action, the first to be documented after the *reconquista* of Justinian.⁶

The local hagiotopography, combined with the evidence from other types of sources, preserves valuable reminiscences of the Byzantine *oikoumene*. Still, the paucity of sources as well as the ambivalence of the ones at our disposal hardly allows one to use this evidence for the simplistic discussion *pro* or *contra* the

⁵ Formally, as a whole, local Dalmatian hagiographic production fits better Western and Latin hagiography rather than contemporary Byzantine. Besides many literary aspects of this distinction, unlike contemporary Greek hagiography of surrounding areas (Greece, Southern Italy), there are no contemporary early medieval Byzantine saints in any of these accounts.

⁶ What remains uncertain is the outcome or the success of this action. While the traditional scholarship saw the period of the ninth century as the time of the recovery of the Byzantine rule in Dalmatia, some scholars attempted to break this representation (cf. Ančič, “Waning” and his references to the studies of Roberto Cessi.

Byzantine presence in the Adriatic during the Early Middle Ages. In the light of these observations, I hope that the present case study (tentative as it is) will illustrate the complexity which one has to face when dealing with the region where so many political and cultural influences overleapt.

I. The Geographical Framework and the Problems of the Research

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the problem of the chronological layers of the cult of St Martin of Tours and the directions of its dissemination in the territory of Late Antique and Early Medieval Dalmatia (more precisely, within the Croatian principality and in the neighboring cities of central Dalmatia) between the 5th and the 9th c. This research has more questions than answers. The major problem is the absence of written sources that would clarify who spread the cult of St Martin in this region and when. Due to the paucity of written data, I will mostly rely on archaeological, hagiotopographical, and art historical evidence.⁷ At the present state of research it is hardly possible to provide any firm conclusions. Yet, I hope that this work will inspire or initiate further study of the matter. If one is to judge from the extant hagiotopographical evidence, Martin seems to have been one of the most popular medieval saints in the territories that constitute modern Republic of Croatia.⁸ A recent project identifies more than 85 sites connected to the cult of St Martin in the region roughly corresponding to the Roman province of Dalmatia.⁹ Out of this relatively large number, Badurina, the author of the *Hagiotopography of Croatia*, has considered only two churches as Late Antique and some fifteen more as Early Medieval ones.¹⁰ Although I find this

⁷ The original intention to examine the cult of St Martin of Tours in the territory of Late Antique province of Dalmatia should have also included the evidence from the neighbouring areas of Istria and Lower Pannonia. However, the quantity of evidence and the problems it raises made me narrow down the frame of the investigation and, as a result, these two regions were left out of this paper.

⁸ St Martin comes as “the eight” saint, after St John the Baptist, St Nicholas, St Peter (and Paul), St Michael, St George, St Anthony of Padua, and St Roch. Cf. Anđelko Badurina, *Hagiotopografija Hrvatske* [Hagiotopography of Croatia], CD-Rom (Zagreb: IPU, 2006).

⁹ The project covers the southern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia mostly leaving out modern Bosnia.

¹⁰ To illustrate some of the problems it suffices to overview the results of the project which show that a very large number of sites connected to the cult of St Martin consist of hagiotoponyms or churches known only from written sources. Another large portion of the standing churches were, at least in their existing form, built or dedicated to St Martin in the Late Middle Ages, or even later periods. While many preserved toponyms certainly do reflect the existence of the cult at some time, for many of the standing churches it is hardly

interpretation problematic, it is certainly interesting that the majority of these sites are important for the research in the period of the “Croatian national dynasty” (c. 830–c. 1100), the period in which, as put by the same author, one is to seek the origins of the cult of St Martin in Croatia. According to his view this three-hundred year period witnessed two major “building waves”: the first being connected to Carolingian “re-Christianisation” of the Dalmatian hinterland in the ninth century, and the second to the “Golden Age” of the Croatian kingdom in the eleventh century. While there is ample evidence of the cult of St Martin in the later periods, the introduction of the cult into the Croatian principality is, according to many authors, to be connected to the Carolingians.¹¹

possible to find out when they were actually dedicated to of St Martin. Cf. Badurina, *Hagiotopografija*.

¹¹ As the most recent ones, see Badurina, *Hagiotopografija*; Antonija Zaradija-Kiš, *Sveti Martin: kult sveca i njegova tradicija u Hrvatskoj* [St Martin: The cult of the saint and his tradition in Croatia] (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2004), 111-13.

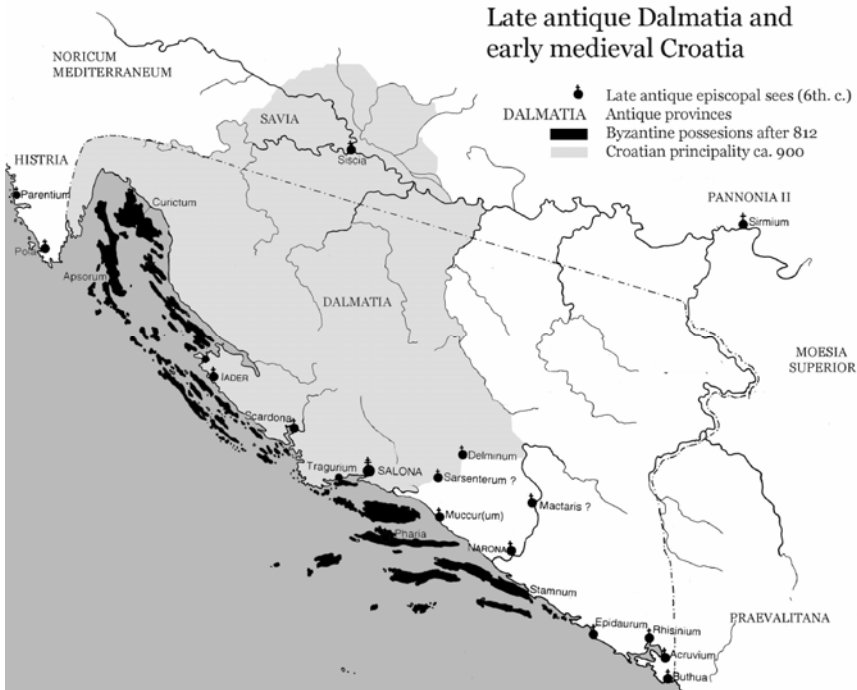


Fig. 10-1: Late antique Dalmatia and early medieval Croatia

The relation between the rise of the cult of St Martin in Dalmatia and the Frankish missionary activities in the early medieval Croatian principality in Dalmatian hinterland has already been pointed out by scholars. This theory has been in fact repeated so regularly that it became a *topos* in Croatian literature touching upon the medieval cult of St Martin. There is, on the other hand, a recent tendency in Croatian scholarship to connect the emergence of the cult to the period of Justinian's *reconquista*.¹² Considering the former as a still prevailing paradigm, I shall depart from the "Carolingian thesis". Namely, the cult of St Martin is often, and to a large extent justly, perceived as closely connected to the "Frankish

¹² Nikola Jakšić, "Preživjele ranokršćanske crkve u srednjovjekovnoj Ninskoj biskupiji [Surviving Early Christian churches in the medieval bishopric of Nin]," *Diadora* 15 (1993): 129-30; repeated in: idem, "La survivance des édifices paléochrétiens dans les terre de la principauté Croate," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 1 (1995): 43; further elaborated in: idem, "Patron Saints of the Medieval Gates in Diocletian's Palace," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 9 (2003): 187-94. Other authors sharing this view will be referred to in the text.

monarchy".¹³ The cult that developed around the saint's relics in Tours was an important focus of the Merovingian "royal memory". This formed an important link between the early cult of St Martin and its "political" use by the Carolingians.¹⁴ Martin's Pannonian origin, as recently stressed, might have indeed served as an ideological cover or the "spiritual patronage" of the Carolingian conquest of Illyricum.¹⁵ With regard to the Carolingian use of the cult of St Martin in the missionary activities in Central and South-Eastern Europe,¹⁶ the multitude of churches dedicated to St Martin in the Croatian principality seems to provide the evidence for Martin's popularity among the élites of early medieval Croatia.¹⁷ There is no reason to doubt that the Frankish missionaries spread and promote the cult in Dalmatia, and that the cult was accepted by the Croatian élites. These two hypotheses bring us to the ninth century as the *datum post quem* the cult can be firmly attested. Martin's Croatian destiny, however, was more complex. Beyond the more or less uncritically repeated "Carolingian thesis" and the recently advertised "Justinianic thesis" there are other reasons which must have contributed to the dissemination and popularity of the cult in the eastern Adriatic. Among these, I would like to call attention to yet another intriguing aspect—the possible early connections between the local Christian elites and Italian cult centres.¹⁸ In

¹³ For the traditional view on this, see Eugen Ewig, "Le culte de saint Martin de Tours à l'époque franque," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France* 47 (1961): 1-18.

¹⁴ Although some elements of the traditional narrative were recently seriously criticised (cf. Allan Scott McKinley, "The First Two Centuries of Saint Martin of Tours," *Early Medieval Europe* 14/2 (2006): 173-200, the associations of St Martin with the "Frankish monarchy" undoubtedly remain important in the history of the cult of St Martin in the Early Middle Ages.

¹⁵ Osborne, "Politics," 384-5.

¹⁶ Important examples are mentioned in Bruno Judic, "Le culte de saint Martin dans le haut moyen âge et l'Europe centrale," in *Sveti Martin Tourski kot simbol evropske culture*, ed. Jasmina Arambašić (Celovec-Ljubljana: Mohorjeva družba, 2008), 32-44. I am very grateful to the author who allowed me to consult the paper before it was published.

¹⁷ For the Carolingian influence in the formation of Croatian principality: Nikola Jakšić, et al., *Hrvati i Karolinzi* [The Croats and the Carolingians] (Split: MHAS, 2000); Carlo Bertelli, et al., *Bizantini, Croati, Carolingi: Alba e tramonto di regni e imperi* (Brescia-Milano: Skira, 2001).

¹⁸ Along these "three layers", one should certainly raise the question of the role of the Benedictines in the propagation of the cult of St Martin. Yet the question of the Benedictine role in the dissemination of the saint's cult, overshadowed by a more general unsolved problem of Benedictines' arrival in Dalmatia, should remain open. At the present state of research, I believe that the earliest Benedictine engagement should be discussed in the framework of Frankish missionary activities.

what follows, I shall take into consideration the problem of the chronology of the cult of St Martin in Dalmatia from three aspects: the “Late Antique” or pre-Justinian, the Early Byzantine, and the Carolingian layers will be examined. The starting point of my inquiry is the fact that a relatively considerable number of the medieval churches dedicated to St Martin in Dalmatia were actually built upon Late Antique or Early Byzantine sanctuaries.¹⁹ On the basis of architectural evidence, some of them show clear signs of extensive reconstructions after Justinian’s Gothic wars, but many of them can be dated to a period before the *reconquista*.

II. The Cult before Justinian?

The absence of local written evidence (including epigraphic inscriptions) discourages any attempt to seek the beginnings of the cult in Dalmatia during the fifth and early sixth centuries. Yet, recent studies of the earliest cult of St Martin provide for an inspiring point of reference. Arguing that there was, in fact, no homogenous and centralised cult in Gaul during the “first two centuries of St Martin”, McKinley in a recent paper deconstructed the perception of Gaul as the single important early centre of the cult from where it radiated to Christian Europe.²⁰ From a different angle, Judic arrived at a similar conclusion, convincingly arguing that the most important early centre of the cult of St Martin might have indeed not been Gaul but Italy.²¹ The central issue approached from the different perspectives by the authors of these valuable papers underlines two relevant directions for the research of the early cult of St Martin in Dalmatia: Both McKinley and Judic point out that instead of the relics, one should focus on the written accounts of the life and miracles of the saint, such as Sulpicius Severus’s *Vita Martini*, as well as the poems of Venantius Fortunatus and Paulinus of Périgueux. Once it is accepted that Italy was actually important centre of the dissemination of the cult in the fifth and early sixth centuries, Dalmatia is no longer to be perceived as the region too distant from the source of the cult to be

¹⁹ In the local Dalmatian chronology the tag “Late Antique” or “Early Christian” is usually used to describe the period between the early fourth and mid-seventh centuries. Cf. Pavuša Vežić, *Zadar na pragu kršćanstva: Arhitektura ranoga kršćanstva u Zadru i na zadarskom području* [Zadar on the threshold of Christianity: Early Christian architecture in Zadar and the Zadar area] (Zadar: Arheološki muzej Zadar, 2006), 5. However, the term “Late Antique” is used here voluntarily meaning “Pre-Justinian” (c. 313–535) in order to differentiate it from the (equally voluntarily chosen) term “Early Byzantine” which is used for the period after the *reconquista* of Justinian (roughly 535–640).

²⁰ McKinley, “The First Two Centuries,” 179–81.

²¹ Judic, “Le culte,” 33–4.

worth examination. McKinley also observed that Sulpicius promoted his vision of Martin “from the retreat at a rural *villa*, rather than in association with any particular *civitas*.”²² I find this idea possibly highly relevant for the present inquiry. Although McKinley is sceptical about the evidence for the cult outside Tours during the fifth century, his observations about the social *milieu* in which the writings of Sulpicius came to circulate and in which the cult might have been fostered is very instructive.²³ This line of argumentation also lies in the core of the argument of Judic when he stresses the importance of the *Vita* as opposed to that of the tomb as the focus of the cult.²⁴ The well known statement of Sulpicius that his friend Postumianus spread his *Vita S. Martini* “not only in Italy, but throughout the whole Illyricum”²⁵ provides the earliest reference to the cult “east of Italy”. The role of people like Postumianus or Paulinus of Nola in the dissemination of the cult should by no means be underestimated. As Paulinus himself testifies in a letter dated to c. 400, he shared his enthusiasm about Martin not only with famous Melania the Elder and with Bishop Nicetas of Remesiana in Dacia but also with “very many holy men”.²⁶ At the same time, St Jerome, although he had a poor opinion about Sulpicius’ *Vita*, obviously knew about St Martin.²⁷ An important piece of evidence for the propagation of St Martin’s fame in the provinces east of

²² McKinley, “The First Two Centuries,” 182. Both Paulinus of Périgueux and Perpetuus (461-91), bishop of Tours and one of the first promoters of his cult were members of the “senatorial”, *villa*-dwelling aristocracy (McKinley, “The First Two Centuries,” 187-8).

²³ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁴ McKinley’s opinion that “for much of the fifth century Martin appears likely to have been an obscure and unimportant saint” might (unexpectedly!) prove true for Gaul, but at the same time it is in the light of the evidence presented by Judic hardly convincing for Italy around 500. Although McKinley rightly notices that Italian evidence about the early devotion “seem to have some reliance on Sulpicius’s portrait,” he finds “little of this conclusive about a long-established Italian cult.” *Ibid.*, 189, n. 68. McKinley’s thesis is ambivalent at this point. Limiting his research to Gaul and dismissing the Italian cult in a single footnote, he failed to see what further conclusions may be drawn from his otherwise convincing observations.

²⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogus* 3, 17, 4, see Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogorum libri II*, in *Sulpicii Severi Opera*, ed. Karl Halm, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 1 (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1866), 215.

²⁶ Paulinus Nolanus, *Epist.* 29, 14, see Paulinus Nolanus, *Epistulae*, ed. Wilhelm Hartel, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 29 (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1894), 261.

²⁷ On the probable references to St Martin in the exegetical works of Jerome, see Rajko Bratož, “Martin Tourski in njegovu stiku s Panonijom [Martin of Tours and his contacts with Pannonia],” *Zgodovinski časopis* 60/3-4 (2006): 277-8.

Italy is a brief account of his life by the Greek historian Sozomen who compiled his *Ecclesiastical History* in Constantinople around 445. Sozomen seemingly knew not only Sulpicius's writings, but also another, perhaps local tradition.²⁸ In the case of Jerome and Sozomen, further inquiry in the monastic circle of Aquileia, with which Martin might have been connected, may shed additional light on the possible routes of dissemination of the cult from northern Italy into Illyricum.²⁹ The popularity of Martin in the region is shown also by Martin of Braga (born c. 510-20 in Pannonia). He not only received his Christian name after his saintly compatriot, but also had a personal devotion to St Martin of Tours: already as bishop of Braga in Spain, he compiled a hymn in his honour and purchased his relics.³⁰ It is not clear whether his veneration of St Martin was something home-grown or rather an acquired taste that he developed during his sojourn in the West. In the light of this early evidence of the cult "east of Italy", is it a mere speculation to suppose that, as the *Vita S. Martini* found its way to the members of the Late Antique "literary community", it might have reached the same audience in Dalmatia? This information about the cult in Illyricum is certainly inspiring, but there is a serious problem that no local sources or direct evidence confirm these rather general notions. Therefore, to what extent is it justified to suppose the existence of the cult in Dalmatia not only before the Franks but also before Justinian's conquest? As for the Early Byzantine period, written evidence is non-existent. Yet, on the more general level, antique hagiotopography as well as numerous archaeological finds speak in favour of the survival of the local Roman population beyond the fifth and sixth centuries.³¹ From the point of local archaeological evidence the Late Antique, pre-Justinian period in Dalmatia might be divided into two significantly different phases: the "Constantinian period" (307-79) which saw only the "shy emancipation" of the first urban Christian

²⁸ Sozomenus, *Kirchengeschichte*, eds Joseph Bidez and Gunther Christian Hansen, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*, 50 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), 38-42. Although one might object that it is not self-evident which of the two *Illyrica* Sozomen had on mind—it seems more likely that he meant "Western Illyricum" (the diocese of the Italian prefecture) and not the separate prefecture accordingly called "Eastern Illyricum".

²⁹ Cf. the paper by Alessio Peršič, "L'apporto delle fonti martiniane alle storiografia della spiritualità Cristiana aquileiese, riscoperta come incunabolo del monachesimo occidentale fra i secoli III e V," in *Sveti Martin Tourski kot simbol evropske culture*, ed. Jasmina Arambašić (Celovec-Ljubljana: Mohorjeva družba, 2008), 144-60.

³⁰ Cf. Bratož, "Martin Tourski," 278-9.

³¹ For the rich material for the discussion of the problem of continuity-discontinuity in Dalmatia is to be found in: *Starohrvatska spomenička baština—rođenje prvog hrvatskog kulturnog pejzaža* [Old Croatian heritage: Birth of the first Croatian cultural ambient], eds Miljenko Jurković and Tugomir Lukšić (Zagreb: MGC, 1996).

communities, and the second, the “Theodosian period” (379-527), which experienced the building of the first larger Christian complexes.³² It is during the later period that the private *villae* as the centres of economic and other activities of Late Antique elites were equipped with the earliest type of Christian funeral and memorial buildings. The existence of these first *ecclesiae paganae* (*oratoria* and *ecclesiae* in the rural hinterland) shows the preservation of classical relations between the *urbs* and its agricultural suburbia. The size and complexity of some of these churches built inside the *villae rusticae* of Christian landowners reflect the development of Christian religious life beyond the frame of family practices (the building of baptisteries!). A brief survey of the chosen sites in the surrounding of Zadar (*Iader*) will suffice to present the possible relevance (also the weaknesses!) of the proposed hypotheses.

According to recent excavations it is possible to trace roughly 45 *villae rusticae* in the modern diocese of Zadar. Out of 12 sites with Early Christian churches identified inside the *villae*, 5 are in some way connected to St Martin. Each of the sites would certainly require scrupulous and separate investigation, but a brief overview of some aspects might prove useful for further discussion. The northernmost locality is the site of a *villa* with preserved church architecture called *Mratinja* (*S. Martinus*) on the island of Vir. In the second locality called *Debeljak*, close to the village of Sukošan (*S. Cassianus*),³³ there was a medieval church dedicated to St Martin (completely destroyed in the war of 1991) which lay in the close vicinity of a yet unearthed *villa* with an early Christian church of an unknown dedication.³⁴ The third site of interest is the church in the village Nevidane on the island of Pašman, dated to the late fifth century on the basis of

³² Dalmatia was ruled by the Goths for half a century (c. 475–c. 535).

³³ Ante Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura na području današnje Zadarske nadbiskupije* [Early Christian architecture in the territory of the bishopric of Zadar] (Zadar: Filozofski fakultet u Zadru–Zadarska nadbiskupija, 2002), 72; Vežić, *Zadar*, 106-7.

³⁴ Fragments of the Early Christian church furniture were found in the ruins of St Martin. Vežić, *Zadar*, 107.

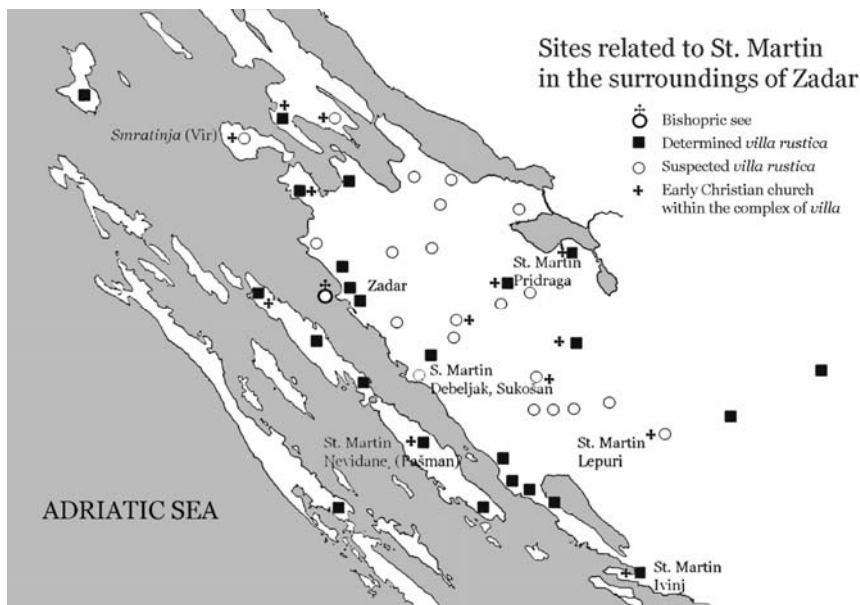


Fig. 10-2. Late antique sites connected to the cult of St Martin in the surroundings of Zadar (after Vežić)

contemporary finds in its surrounding.³⁵ The medieval cemetery church of St Martin in the village of Lepuri³⁶ fared as bad as the one in Sukošan; it was razed to the ground during the war of 1991. This, however, proved to be a lucky chance for the archaeologists, who, beneath the remains of the medieval walls, unearthed a Late Antique church and found many fragments of Early Christian church furniture and decorative pieces of architecture.³⁷ The church, built close to a Roman *villa* or *vicus*, was originally a memorial church, which, in the second building phase, became a complex basilica with annexes. It was thoroughly rebuilt in the mid-ninth century in the pre-Romanesque style and substantially reconstructed in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries to finally acquire the shape in which it stood until 1992. So far it has often been interpreted as being dedicated

³⁵ Ibid., 127; Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura*, 95-7.

³⁶ Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura*, 67-9; Vežić, *Zadar*, 98-101.

³⁷ Vedrana Delonga, "Predromanički natpisi iz crkve sv. Martina u Lepurima kod Benkovca," *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 35 (1995): 303-25, lists and analyses the fragments.

to St Martin in the early medieval period while the previous *titulus* was considered unknown.³⁸

The cemetery church of St Martin in Pridraga (medieval *Sutmartindol* or “St Martin’s dale”) is one of the best preserved Late Antique churches in Dalmatia (with the continuity of liturgical practice for 1500 years).³⁹ This trefoil church built in the surroundings of a large *villa rustica* is, according to its architectural characteristics, dated to late fifth or mid-sixth century.⁴⁰ According to the interpretation of Vežić, the church was originally a memorial chapel of the owner of the nearby *villa* while additional architectural elements (narthex, side spaces and baptistery) were probably added in the mid-sixth century. The exterior ambulatory (*deambulatorium laterale*) in the shape of porticos (*porticati*), reflecting particular liturgical features, was probably constructed at the same time.⁴¹

The example of Pridraga can be used in many ways as a paradigm for numerous other sites. In the first place, the church is built at some 300 metres distance from the *villa* which corresponds to a very similar situation in Muline (on the island of Ugljan), Bilice (near Skradin) and some other sites. One of the possible explanations for this dislocation of the churches from the living quarters might be seen in their function as cemetery churches.⁴² Secondly, at some 300 metres from St Martin there is a hexaconch early medieval church of St Michael (dated to late eighth to early ninth centuries). The proximity of these two *tituli*, although to my knowledge not emphasized by scholars, appears in a few localities in Dalmatia. Besides Pridraga and Nevidane, this combination is found in the vicinity of Split (Kaštela), on the island of Cres (Martinšćica-Miholašćica) and possibly on some other sites. It might be tempting to interpret the vicinity of the two *tituli* as originating from the same background (Early Byzantine period of Justinian’s *reconquista*), but there is no evidence of the “synchronic” dedication of the churches to the Pannonian saint and the warrior archangel. Moreover, while the churches of St Martin (at least those in Pridraga and Nevidane) are, in architectural

³⁸ Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura*, 69.

³⁹ The church, as many other churches in the region, was heavily damaged in 1991. The most recent titles dealing with the site are: Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura*, 52-6; Vežić, *Zadar*, 85-94.

⁴⁰ Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura*, 56.

⁴¹ Similar features connected to the processions in *Santa Croce* in Ravenna might reveal the source. Vežić, *Zadar*, 92.

⁴² Although proposed interpretation of the connection of the cult of St Martin and the dead might prove useful (cf. Zaradija Kiš, *Sveti Martin*, 47), I doubt whether it is relevant to the Late Antique layer of the cult in the region.



Fig. 10-3. The church of St Martin in Pridraga (Photo: T. Vedriš)

terms, undoubtedly Late Antique buildings, the sanctuaries of St Michael are of early medieval origin. This fact made archaeologist Uglešić to suppose that it was in fact St Michael who was the original patron of the churches in question, and who was later replaced by St Martin in the Carolingian period.⁴³ In the light of this argument, the fact that pre-Romanesque churches of St Michael are built very close to the “original position” of the cult was interpreted as the wish to both preserve the older patron (Michael) and to introduce a new one (Martin). Although I do not find this interpretation very convincing (it obviously rests on the preposition that St Martin was the Frankish *titulus*), it is, at least to my knowledge, the only attempt to interpret this interesting “coincidence”. Certainly, it is not possible to find the right answers to this intriguing question at the moment; yet it

⁴³ Cf. Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura*, 56, 97.

should be addressed within a larger issue: the need to establish reliable “synchronic groups” of saints in the region.⁴⁴

Another important site (outside the actual Zadar diocese) is the complex in Ivinj.⁴⁵ There is a three-nave Late Antique basilica with a baptistery erected within the central complex of the *villa* and an early medieval church (possibly late-eleventh century) of St Martin at some 20 metres distance from it (also within the parameter of the *villa*). Although the *titulus* of the earlier church is unknown the dedication of the nearby church to St Martin was recently interpreted as evidence of the continuity of the cult of St Martin between the sixth and eleventh centuries.⁴⁶ The fact that the Romanesque church was not built inside (or upon) the earlier church might point in the direction of a possible discontinuity of the cult practice, but the archaeological evidence (i.e. early medieval grave goods) seems to support the interpretation that the Late Antique church was used continuously until the Romanesque church was built.⁴⁷ If this interpretation is correct, Ivinj would be an example of the continuity of the ecclesiastical life, and, possibly, of the cult of St Martin between the late fifth (or sixth) and eleventh centuries.⁴⁸ Even if these sites cannot provide an answer to the question posed at the beginning of this paper, they present evidence, however problematic and fragile, that does not allow us to disregard the possibility that local evidence might provide a positive counterpart to the general notions of the cult of St Martin in Illyricum. It certainly invites to further and more detailed inquiry of both the sites mentioned here as well as many other.⁴⁹ Whatever will be the results, it is clear that, unlike in

⁴⁴ A useful catalogue (beside Badurina, *Hagiotopografija* and Zaradija-Kiš, *Sv. Martin*) was provided by Branka Migotti, “Naslovnici ranokršćanskih crkava u Dalmaciji [Patron saints of Early Christian churches in Dalmatia],” *Arheološki radovi i rasprave* 12 (1996).

⁴⁵ Excavations starting in 1994 unearthed relatively large *villa rustica* (c. 2500 m²), the oldest phase dated to the first century. Basilica built inside *villa* was erected between the first half of the fifth and the second half of the sixth centuries. Magda Zorić, “Ivinj, ranokršćanska bazilika s krstionicom [Ivinj, Early Christian basilica with baptismal font],” *Obavijesti Hrvatskog Arheološkog društva* 31/3 (1999): 103-8.

⁴⁶ Vežić, *Zadar*, 95-6.

⁴⁷ Emil Hilje, “Kontinuitet murterskih ranokršćanskih crkava [The continuity of Early Christian churches on Murter],” *Murterski godišnjak* 2 (2004): 37. The church is in its present shape dated to twelfth-thirteenth centuries by the same author.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁹ I am grateful to Neven Budak for drawing my attention to the church of St Martin in Rab (*Arba*) which was originally built outside the city walls, possibly at the site of a Roman cemetery (cf. Neven Budak, “Urban Development of Rab—a Hypothesis,” *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 12 (2006): 133.

Pannonia where the survival of the Christian communities is questionable, abundant archaeological material testifies to the continuity of the cult practices in Dalmatia well beyond the second half of the sixth century.

III. The Justinian Conquest and the Early Byzantine Period (c. 535– c. 640)

With the Gothic wars and Justinian's *renovatio* we arrive at a firmer ground. In this period, Ravenna played a key role in the propagation of Martin's cult. Theoderic's palace church was rededicated by the Byzantines to St Martin, a fact which has already been used as an argument for the use of St Martin as an important symbol of "anti-heretical" agenda of Justinian's *reconquista*. Leaving this otherwise very important issue aside, here I will examine only the chosen evidence for the spreading of the cult in post-Gothic Dalmatia.

The evidence for dissemination of the cult is again at least ambiguous. There are no epigraphic inscriptions, no written evidence whatsoever and no secure dedication from the Early Byzantine centuries in Dalmatia. However, a relatively large number of churches dedicated at an uncertain time to St Martin were actually built or renewed during the period. What is highly significant, they are to be found not only in the Lower (Northern), but also in the territories of the Upper (Southern) Dalmatia, which were neither directly controlled by the Franks (as the district of Zadar) nor were part of the Croatian principality in the ninth century. Attempts to connect the churches like that in *Žrnovo* on one of the southernmost Dalmatian islands (Korčula) with Frankish influence are indeed far from convincing.⁵⁰

Relations between Northern Italy and Dalmatia had been strong even before the sixth century. The establishment of the exarchate under Justinian actually made Ravenna a centre of Dalmatia for more than two hundred years. Moreover, the period after Justinian's Gothic wars saw the appearance of the first "Early Byzantine" elements in the local Dalmatian architecture.⁵¹ This assumption, based on the study of the formal relations between the local evidence and the broader architectural and artistic trends, might prove a useful framework for establishing the directions (even if hypothetical) of the dissemination of the cult of St Martin and other cults in the sixth century. The introduction of new architectural and

⁵⁰ Cf. Zaradija Kiš, *Sveti Martin*, 126. The same objection applies to the hypothesis that the cult was promoted by early medieval Croatian elites. The existence of the shrines outside the territories controlled by Croats during the ninth to tenth centuries simply cannot be explained in this way.

⁵¹ Vežić, *Zadar*, 5.

decorative elements corresponds well to the shift from what Vežić has termed “the first phase of spontaneous Christianisation” (exemplified in the private efforts of the landowners) to the more organised activities of the Church under Justinian, clearly attested in the large-scale adaptation and reconstruction of the ecclesiastical buildings.⁵² The constellation of archaeological evidence and historical situation supports the conclusion that this sixth-century change reflected not only the growing interest of the Dalmatian urban bishops in the Christianisation of the hinterland, but also the massive effort of Justinian in the reconstruction of the “infrastructures of the Empire” on the Eastern Adriatic.⁵³ Although it is impossible to compare the scale of the ecclesiastical building activity in Dalmatia to that in Istria (exemplified by *Santa Maria Formosa* in Pula (*Pola*), or by the *Basilica Euphrasiana* in Poreč (*Parentium*)), the erection of the new and the adaptation of the older Late Antique churches clearly reflects a large-scale activity.⁵⁴ Justinian’s *reconquista* and its aftermath clearly correspond to the emergence of the cult of a recognisable group of “warrior saints” whose churches mark both the scope of “Justinian’s missionary activities” and the important route of the *limes marittimus* along the eastern Adriatic coast.⁵⁵

The church of St Martin in Split (a small chapel constructed in the corridor above the northern gate (*Porta aurea*) of Diocletian’s palace and, in its present form, dated to eleventh century), was recently stressed as maybe the key argument for the Justinian-Ravennate origin of Martin’s cult in Dalmatia. Relying on the significance of the constellation of the patron saints of the four town gates (Anastasia, Apollinaris, Theodore, Martin) Jakšić argues for the Justinianic origin of these *tituli*. The proposed argumentation is further supported by the discovery of altar *stipes* dated to the sixth century. Although Jakšić’s dating of the churches “in

⁵² Typical example is the shift from the funeral to congregational liturgical functions which is clearly reflected in the adaptation and enlargement of the churches.

⁵³ Cf. Vežić, *Zadar*, 178. For the historical account of Byzantine *reconquista* of the Adriatic, see Goldstein, *Bizant na Jadranu*; idem, “Byzantium.”

⁵⁴ Although there were no hierarchical links between Zadar and Aquileia, strong cultural links connect them. Therefore, many local architectural elements were interpreted as reflecting Ravenna-Aquileian influence. Vežić, *Zadar*, 140. For the Byzantine “architectural presence” in Istria, see Marina Vicelja-Matijašić, *Istra i Bizant* [Istria and Byzantium] (Rijeka: Matica Hrvatska, 2007).

⁵⁵ For the Byzantine “warrior saints” cf. Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

the period right after the end of Gothic war of Justinian” cannot be considered “proven”,⁵⁶ it is very acceptable.⁵⁷

In the last decade, a number of scholars stressed the Justinianic origin of the cult of St Martin in Dalmatia. Chevalier finds it “likely that some of the Dalmatian Early Christian churches were dedicated to St Martin”, although she reminds of the fact that his cult might also indicate Frankish influence. Chevalier connects the proposed sixth-century dedication with the six churches (besides the mentioned Pridraga and Nevidene, those in modern-day Čepikuće and Martinšćica, Split and, possibly the one in Podstrana (*Pituntium*)).⁵⁸ At a more general level, the proposal to connect the cult with Justinian’s period is also accepted by Čaušević, who notes other possible Late Antique churches on the island of Krk (*Curictum*).⁵⁹

Observing that local historiography until recently interpreted the cult of St Martin as the “expression of Slavic Christianity emerging under Frankish influence”, Migotti situates the cult of St Martin in the “relatively reliable horizon of Justinian.”⁶⁰ She even allows the possibility that many of the saints of this horizon might have arrived at Dalmatia even before Justinian.⁶¹ Moreover, in her analysis of the Early Christian churches in central Dalmatia, Migotti concludes that at least four of them originated in Justinian’s period at latest (Podstrana, Pridraga, Split, Trogir) and considers eight more churches as probably originating from the same period (Diklo, Donje Selo, Ivinje, Lepuri, Mratovo, Sukošan,

⁵⁶ The same church was, in fact, used to argue for the Carolingian origin of the *titulus* (for Osborne, “Politics,” 385, the inscription on the altar screen is an “eloquent testimony to the Frankish penetration into Dalmatia”). The conclusion is, to my opinion, based on a problematic dating and interpretation and, therefore, not very convincing.

⁵⁷ However, I do not find the author’s insisting on the dedication of another of the four churches to *Anastasis* and not St Anastasia, crucial for the argument. The Late Antique cult of the Sirmian martyr would also fit his interpretation well.

⁵⁸ Pascale Chevalier, *Ecclesiae Dalmatiae. L’architecture paleochrétienne de la province romaine de Dalmatie (IV^e -VII^e s.)*, vol. 2 (Rome–Split: École française de Rome–Musée archéologique de Split, 1996), 44.

⁵⁹ Morana Čaušević, “L’île de Krk dans l’Antiquité tardive,” *Mémoire de D.E.A.*, Université Paris XII (2005), 74-5, 98, 114, 122-3. Maybe the most interesting site is the one on the islet of St Mark where the church of St Martin might possibly be connected with Justinianic fortress situated on this important strategic post of the Adriatic *limes*. I am grateful to the author for providing me with the data from her yet unpublished M.A. thesis.

⁶⁰ Branka Migotti, “Neka pitanja ranokršćanske hagiografije srednje Dalmacije [Some problems of the Early Christian hagiography of Central Dalmatia],” *Arheološki radovi i rasprave* 11(1988): 156-7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 157-8.

Sumartin, Vranjic).⁶² Although it is too early to make final conclusions about the churches dedicated to St Martin in the Late Antique–Early Byzantine Dalmatia the following map shows some of the sites relevant for further research. The choice is based on the existent work of the cited scholars, and will certainly need to be modified.⁶³

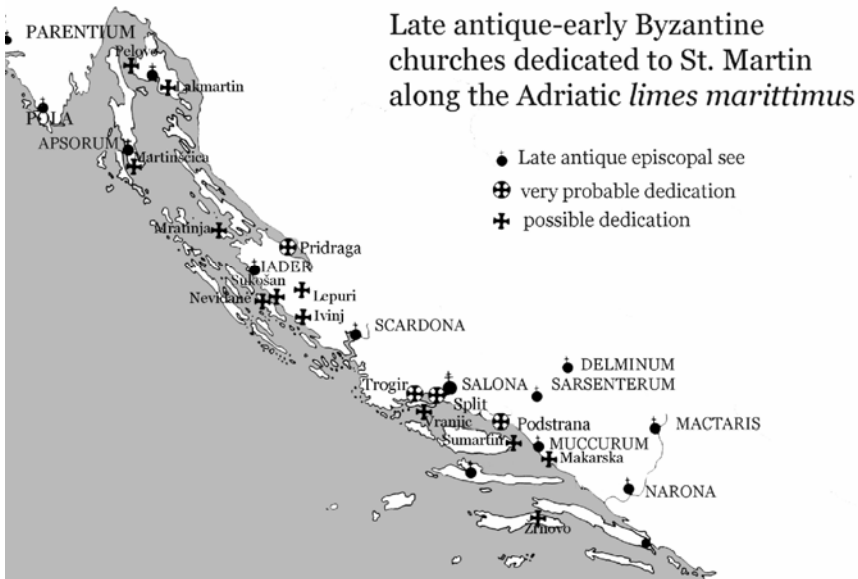


Fig. 10-4: Late antique–Early Byzantine churches of St Martin along the *limes marittimus* in Dalmatia

⁶² Migotti, “Naslovnici,” 225.

⁶³ For instance, I was informed by Basić about other highly relevant sites in Dalmatian hinterland such as: Mratovo near Drniš, St Martin in Gornji Tučepi, St Martin in Novljansko polje, St Martin in Podskoči near Bribir, St Martin in Grižane, St Martin in Drivenik, most of which are described as “Pre-Romanesque” For mostly technical reasons I have not included these sites in the present analysis.

St Martin, the “last of the Western saints to enter the Byzantine liturgical calendar”⁶⁴ was, according to Sozomen, not only born in the “eastern territory”, but he also spent some of his “philosophical life” in *Illyria*. Martin’s fight against the Arian heresy stressed both by Sulpicius and by Sozomen might have been used (as it seemingly derives from the famous re-dedication in Ravenna) as a symbol of anti-Arian and anti-Gothic agenda of Justinian’s *reconquista* and its aftermath. It is also clear that the Greek author of his eighth- to ninth-century *Life*, obviously free from the inhibitions of the Westerners against the military career of the saint, esteemed him as “high-ranking soldier of noble birth.”⁶⁵ All these features might have made St Martin an ideal choice for the spiritual patronage of Justinian’s *reconquista* of Gothic Dalmatia.

IV. The Role of the Franks

The Carolingians have obviously had an important role in the propagation of the cult of St Martin in the region after the ninth century.⁶⁶ However, in the light of the presented evidence, the hypothesis that the cult of St Martin came to Dalmatia only with the Carolingians should be nuanced. The Germanic and Slavic intrusions did not completely destroy the Late Antique cultural and religious landscape in Lower Dalmatia. The network of sanctuaries created at the beginning of the Croatian principality did not start *ex nihilo* in the early ninth century but was very likely a large scale *restoratio*.⁶⁷ Numerous examples illustrate the efforts of the early medieval Croatian ecclesiastical and lay elites in the restoration of the particular Late Antique churches. A ninth century inscription from Begovača

⁶⁴ Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 200.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 201. It is, however, not without difficulties to interpret Martin as a “Byzantine warrior saint.” Martin was indeed commemorated in the Byzantine synaxaries (bearing, among other, the attribute *στρατηλάτης*), but his cult was seemingly not very popular in early medieval Byzantium. Moreover, the only early medieval Byzantine depiction of St Martin represents him as a bishop and not as a soldier (*Menologium of Basil II*, early eleventh century; Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 201). For the place of the hagiography of St Martin in Byzantium cf. Troupeau, Gérard. “La vie de saint Martin dans les synaxaires des Eglises orientales.” *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique de Touraine* 44 (1995): 631-7. Once again, I am grateful to B. Judic for providing me with that article.

⁶⁶ The observation of Zaradija Kiš, *Sveti Martin*, 113 about the density of Martinian sanctuaries in the area of Nin, a region “especially important in the period of the Croatian rulers” is especially worth examination.

⁶⁷ For a balanced account of the pre-Romanesque art in Dalmatia, see Željko Rapanić, *Predromaničko doba u Dalmaciji* [Pre-Romanesque period in Dalmatia] (Split: Logos, 1987).

testifies to the adaptation and revitalisation of the fifth- to sixth-century church: (pr)O REMED(io) A(n)IME SVE REN(ovavit) HVNC TE(emplum).⁶⁸ The same practice echoes in the warning of Pope Stephen VI (896-7) to Theodosius, Bishop of Nin that “all the churches which were destroyed through the wrath of the barbarians should be renovated” reminding the “bishop of the Croats” that “it should not happen to you, while establishing the new ones, that you would forget the old ones.”⁶⁹ Although the “churches” here should probably be understood as the Churches and not the buildings⁷⁰, this sentence also echoes the process, otherwise well attested, of a large scale *renovatio* of Late Antique churches (if in a reduced size) in the pre-Romanesque style in the period between the early ninth through the eleventh centuries.⁷¹ Yet, again, these general observations cannot prove the pre-Carolingian existence and continuity of the cult of St Martin. There is indeed no secure material evidence that early medieval churches in the Croatian principality were dedicated to the Pannonian saint before the arrival of the Franks. But, the interpretation of the cult as exclusively introduced by Carolingians in many cases also relies on the presumption of the Carolingian origin of the cult and not on textual or archaeological evidence. There is no proof that the Carolingian St Martin replaced an older *titulus*. The earliest written evidence of the cult of St Martin in medieval Dalmatia is preserved in the *Chronicle* of John the Deacon. Reporting on the peace treaty between the Venetian *dux* Peter Tradonicus and the Croatian *dux* Mislav (*Muisclavus*) in 839, the Venetian chronicler states that Peter “went to the place called *sancti Martini curtis*.”⁷² Scholars localised this otherwise unknown locality at various places, from Cres in the north to Podstrana in the south (although none of the proposed sites lay within the probable borders of the

⁶⁸ Vedrana Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments of Early Medieval Croatia* (Split: MHAS, 1996), 183.

⁶⁹ *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 1, ed. Marko Kostrenčić (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1967), 21-2. *et omnes ecclesie, que barbarorum rabie destructe sunt, assiduis precibus, ut restaurentur, imploramus, ita tamen, ut in novarum ecclesiarum restauratione neglectus non proveniat antiquarum*. There is an ongoing debate whether the term *ecclesie* should be understood as buildings or Churches.

⁷⁰ I am grateful to Mirjana Matijević Sokol for this observation.

⁷¹ Uglešić, *Ranokršćanska arhitektura*, 122. Details: Jakšić, “La survivance des édifices paléochrétiens,” 148-9.

⁷² Johannes Diaconus, *Chronicon*, see *Documenta historiae chroaticae periodum antiquam illustrantia*, ed. Franjo Rački, *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, 7 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1877), 335-6.

Croatian principality).⁷³ Avoiding the debated issue of what *curtis* in early medieval Dalmatia actually meant, I would accept the opinion that it can be interpreted as residence of the local ruler.⁷⁴

If it is accepted that *sancti Martini curtis* was the residence of the Croatian *dux*, one of numerous Late Antique *villae* comes to mind that might have been re-built in order to serve new purposes.⁷⁵ Should we think that the *curtis* in question (but other sites also) was named after the “Frankish” St Martin who had just arrived at Dalmatia, or was it one of the Roman *villae* with a church that had been dedicated (at an unknown time) to St Martin? Unfortunately, this is a question to which it is not possible to provide a clear answer. In this case (as well as in some others) the same evidence might be used to argue for both interpretations. Similarly, the representation of a warrior on horseback from St Martin in Pridraga might be used to “prove” that the taste of the local military elites of the ninth century (if the fragment is correctly dated to that period) corresponded to the preferences of their Carolingian spiritual patrons. But, if the cult or the dedication had been preserved since the post-Justinian restoration, it might also be argued that the new local elites, similarly to Justinian’s soldiers, shared an interest in warrior saints.⁷⁶

Although there are (epistemologically speaking) no direct proofs for the existence and continuity of the cult between the sixth and ninth centuries, there is certainly a lot of evidence which points to continuity. Dedicatory inscription from Otres from the time of the “Lord Branimir” (879-892) presents a fine example. This fragment, sometimes presented as a proof of the Carolingian origin of the cult, provides the information about re-construction of the church and lists the following saints: St Peter, Blessed Virgin Mary, St George, St Stephen, St Martin, St Chrysogon, and the Holy Cross.⁷⁷ Without much elaboration here, it would certainly be very hard to interpret the presented combination as exclusively

⁷³ The latest attempt is that of Milan Ivanišević, “Otok hrvatskog vladara [The island of the Croatian king],” *Tusculum* 1 (2008): 109-24. The author’s argumentation is very much to the point when he stresses the weakness of all the previous attempts to identify *curtis S. Martini* with the places which all laid outside the jurisdiction of the contemporary Croatian dukedom.

⁷⁴ Neven Budak, *Prva stoljeća Hrvatske* [The first centuries of Croatia] (Zagreb: HSN, 1994), 149, interprets *curtis* as a sign of Frankish influence.

⁷⁵ Cf. the case of Bijaći, one of the residences of the early medieval Croatian rulers in the surrounding of Split.

⁷⁶ The interpretation of the figure, as representing St Martin (Zaradija Kiš, *Sveti Martin*, 123), is certainly intriguing but not very convincing. For the analysis of the relief, see Ivo Petricoli, “Reljef konjanika iz Pridrage,” *Diadora* 8 (1975): 111-17.

⁷⁷ Delonga, *Latin Epigraphic*, 228-9.

“Frankish saints”.⁷⁸ Moreover, the very concept of the “Frankish patronage” over the early Croatian principality, much stressed lately, should not be oversimplified. The convergence of the available archaeological evidence in the light of the general “conservatism” of hagiotopography allows for the hypothesis of the continuity of many older cults. Many elements of Late Antique (Justinian or even earlier) hagiotopography were obviously respected and revitalised during the period of the Croatian “restoration” (c. 810–c. 890) under the *aegis* of the Carolingians. The question of the role of the Benedictine monks in the dissemination of the cult in the Early Middle Ages is overshadowed by the larger and unsolved problem of the time of their arrival at Dalmatia. Although the information about the Benedictines in Istria in the time of Justinian, as well as some (doubtful) archaeological evidence might possibly attest to their earlier presence, there is no clear evidence of Benedictine activities in Dalmatia before the ninth century.⁷⁹ It is nowadays broadly accepted that the first Benedictine monasteries in the region were the foundation of the Croatian Duke Trpimir near Klis, and the monastery of St Bartholomew in Knin.⁸⁰ Bearing in mind the otherwise important role of Benedictines in the dissemination of the cult of St Martin, one might be surprised to learn that the surviving evidence testifies to almost no Benedictine monasteries or churches dedicated to St Martin in early medieval Dalmatia.⁸¹ Taking into consideration all the limitations imposed by the absence of written sources and the scarcity of archaeological evidence, I will confine my observations to the question of the possible Martinian *tituli* connected to the Benedictine order.

⁷⁸ Another contemporary piece of evidence is a small fragment of an architrave of an altar screen from the pre-Romanesque church of Blessed Mary in Ostrovica (near Benkovac), *ibid.*, 223–4.

⁷⁹ For the general history of the Benedictines in Croatia, see Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj i ostalim našim krajevima* [Benedictines in Croatia and our other regions], 2 vols (Split: Benediktinski priorat–Tkon, 1963–4).

⁸⁰ Neven Budak, “Foundations and Donations as a Link between Croatia and the Dalmatian Cities in the Early Middle Ages (9th–11th c.),” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55 (2007): 485. Croatian rulers founded at least three more monasteries until the eleventh centuries. The first monasteries in Dalmatian cities are known to date from the same period. Relying on my recent research on the possible role of the Frankish-Lombard monks in Croatian principality I would propose a somewhat earlier dating as well as additional localities like the early Benedictine monasteries in Dalmatian hinterland.

⁸¹ Although the importance of the role of the Benedictines in early medieval Dalmatia has been underlined by modern scholars (e.g. Zorad Kiš, *Sveti Martin*, 109), I find no actual evidence to support this general observation.

Starting from the north, one should surely scrutinise two traditions which mention the monastery of St Martin on the island of Cres. The *Vita S. Gerardi* describes how St Gerald (d. 1046), on his way to Bethlehem, stayed in the certain monastery of St Martin where his friend was abbot.⁸² Another tradition is preserved in the *Annalales Camaldolenses* which credit St Gaudentius, the bishop of Osor (d. after 1050) with the construction of the monastery of St Martin near his hometown.⁸³ The church of St Martin on the neighbouring island of Krk, given by the local bishop to the Italian monasteries of St Cyprian and St Benedict in 1153, was also sometimes interpreted as a Benedictine monastery. However, it is actually very unlikely that the monastery was ever built there.⁸⁴ In the vicinity of Krk, sources mention the “abbey of St Martin” *de flumine*, or Abbey *sancti Martini in Vinodol* in the Croatian hinterland.⁸⁵ Ostojić considered the evidence problematic. Unable to locate the abbey, he interpreted this information in the light of the fact that abbey (*opatiija*) in the local *Law code of Vinodol* (1288) meant simply “monastery”. Therefore he expressed reservations about the existence of the Benedictine community.⁸⁶ There is also a possibility that there was a monastery of St Martin in *villa Grohote* (possibly on the island of Šolta, near Split), but the evidence is highly doubtful.⁸⁷

As for the churches, Ostojić listed only a few in his catalogue that certainly belonged to the Order of St Benedict. The abbey of St Nicholas in Omišalj (on the island of Krk) owned the already mentioned church of St Martin on the islet of St Mark. Confirming the earlier document of Celestine III (1191-8), dated to 1195, Pope Inocent III (1198-1216) mentions two churches near Zadar (*sancti Martini Diculi* and *sancti Martini ante portam civitatis*)⁸⁸ in a document dated 1204. In

⁸² *Documenta historiae chroaticae*, 435-6. It cannot be proven that the monastery in question was actually on Cres, but the choice seems quite convincing.

⁸³ The land around the seemingly Late Antique church of St Martin in the southern part of the island belonged to the monastery of St Peter in Osor and, according to a local tradition, there was a Camaldolese hermitage there. Cf. Daniele Farlati, *Illyricum sacrum: Ecclesia Jadertina cum suffraganeis*, vol. 5 (Venice: Sebastiano Coleti, 1775), 618. Having analysed all the evidence, Ostojić doubted whether it was really a Benedictine monastery, Ostojić, *Benediktinci*, vol. 1, 157-8.

⁸⁴ Ostojić, *Benediktinci*, vol 1, 190-2. For the charter, see Farlati, *Illyricum Sacrum*, vol. 5, 639-40; *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. 2, ed. Tadija Smičiklas (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1904), 74, 75-6.

⁸⁵ Ostojić, *Benediktinci*, vol. 1, 211.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 44-5.

Dubrovnik the little church of St Martin belonged to the monastery of St Andrew and was probably torn down in the fifteenth century.⁸⁹ Ostojić categorised these four mentioned monasteries as “doubtful or alleged”. The scarcity of the churches dedicated to St Martin also does not support the idea of a substantial role of the Benedictines in the dissemination of the cult in early medieval Dalmatia.⁹⁰ However, bearing in mind all the problems connected to the Benedictines’ arrival and early activities in the region, one should not discard the possibility that some of the evidence for either early Byzantine or Carolingian missionary activities might be ascribed to the Benedictines.

V. Instead of a Conclusion

The complete replacement of the traditional “Carolingian thesis” with an equally exclusive new one (whether “Late Antique” or “Early Byzantine”) would be totally futile in the study of the cult of St Martin in early medieval Croatia. Namely, it is highly delusive to tag the particular saints as exclusively Greek, Italian, or Frankish. The manifold cultural contacts made early medieval Dalmatia a region in which “Byzantine presence” might not have been expressed in Greek language or Eastern liturgies. If my hypotheses are correct, the case of St Martin would be an example of a saint whose cult, broadly perceived as exclusively Western, spread in the region to a large extent through the agency of the “Byzantines”. As I hope to have demonstrated throughout this paper, different chronological layers of the cult do not necessary exclude one another. The hypotheses and material presented here invite for further research. Along these lines, it would, in the first place, be of major importance to establish as reliably as possible “synchronic groups” of saints. Secondly, particular sites (only some of which were discussed here) should be treated as different cases and examined separately. But even before further research is undertaken, I find it reasonable to conclude as follows:

1) There is no evidence that the Late Antique Dalmatian *villa*-dwellers read Sulpicius in their Dalmatian rural residences, and almost no evidence that local bishops might have dedicated churches to St Martin before the mid-sixth century. Yet, written sources which mention the geographic dissemination of the cult of St Martin in a constellation with the local archaeological and topographic evidence

⁸⁹ Ibid., 478.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 549. Besides these, he identified a single Benedictine nunnery in Kotor dated to thirteenth to fourteenth centuries as the authentic Martinian (the church of St Martin standing today as St Anne). Cf. *ibid.*, 488, 507-8.

do not allow us to exclude the possibility of the existence of the cult in Dalmatia before the Gothic wars and Justinian's *reconquista*.

2) The conclusions about the cult in the post-Justinian period, resting on the large number of churches built (dedicated) or rebuilt (re-dedicated) after the expulsion of the Goths, allow for more probable conclusions than in the case of the earlier period. Bearing in mind all its weaknesses, the approach proposed by Migotti ("combination of historico-hagiographical and archaeological research, in the light of verified facts of sacral continuity") provides not only basic evidence for the existence of the cult, but also a stimulus for further research.

3) The traditional "Carolingian thesis", although undoubtedly true in its core, should probably also be nuanced. The cult of St Martin certainly did not appear with the Carolingians in Dalmatia *ex nihilo*. "Frankish Christianity", in the words of Migotti, "basically rests on the tradition of Justinian's missionary efforts. Thus, there is no need to see the honouring of the saints of that period as having been brought in by intermediaries (i.e. Franks) since Dalmatia had been part of the Byzantine state."⁹¹ In this sense, the relation between the Late Antique *villae* and early medieval *curtes* or *monasteria* might prove a relevant focus of further research. Finally, in the light of these observations, I believe that Frankish promotion of the cult of St Martin in Dalmatia might be understood as yet another example and aspect of a Carolingian ambitious project of *renovatio*. With the Franks (and their Croatian protégés) actively promoting the cult of St Martin, there are many indications that in Dalmatia they found an existing "Martinian network." Even if the bishop of Tours was not venerated by the Late Antique Dalmatian readers of Sulpice as the ascetic apostle of the Gaul, it seems that St Martin did appear on the eastern Adriatic coast as one of the holy warriors of an earlier *renovatio imperii*—that of Justinian.

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⁹¹ Migotti "Neka pitanja," 158-9 (other examples: Barbara, Vitus, and some of the Old Testament prophets).

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